

30 Day OTP Challenge. by TurtleLoveNote

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Summary:

The 30 Day OTP challenge for mileven.

30 one shots probably all set in the same universe, the year the one shot will change from one shot to one shot.

1. Holding Hands

Day 1 - holding hands.

It took a year for the weird stuff to start happening in Hawkins again. Although a quiet dread started to fill the pits of the boys' stomachs they also tried to calm their excitement, weird stuff normally ment El.

First it was a black sludge backing up through some of the towns sinks and baths, then it was several of the towns maintance workers falling ill after going to investigate the odd gunk. And then it was the three missing people.

Even though history seemed to be repeating itself the boys found that it was Mike who was the pessimist of this particular situation much to their mutual surprise.

The heavy wind and rainfall was echoing throughout the Wheeler basement, the D&D board had been set up but long forgotten when Lucas decided that today was the day they have the "we don't know that shes's dead, she just disappeared, and really wired stuff is happening again" talk. Despite leaving the blanket fort up this entire time Mike found it hard to listen to his friends rattle on for the past four hours about how they should go out just to see if anything happens "just in case."

"We have looked." Came Mikes surprising contribution after a lengthy and loud discussion. " We've looked and looked and followed compasses, and sat outside Hawkins lab for hours, or are you all forgetting that?"

It wasn't long after Mikes outburst that the three boys left. Dragging their bikes through the wheelers lawn the boys couldn't wrap there heads around why it was Mike that couldn't hope that El was out there, but what they didn't underatand was that Mike always had it in his head that she would be back within the year and coming to the realisation that the anniversary had been and gone was hard, the sadness he felt the past week or so made him feel like it never left.

Switching the newly acquired basement t.v off Mike stomped his way upstairs towards his bedroom, his mom stood in the kitchen decorating her fourth batch of cookies that day, normally Mike would have stopped off to try and take one but tonight he found himself utterly disinterested in the warm baked treats.

With the day's failed campaign and the last weeks emotions laying on his shoulders Mike considered getting to bed early and at least make some kind of attempt to get some rest. However he knew that the nightmares would come, just like they've come almost every night these past two weeks. when they started last year they were few and far between often Mike wouldn't remember what they were about, he would just be left with the scared and panicked feeling in the pit of his stomach, now they were vivid situations he could recall perfectly, that often came nightly.

Sighing he grabbed his heavy school backpack, and made his way back down to the basement. As he descended the creaking stairs he saw the abandoned D&D game sitting there on the table, it seemed to be the only thing that Mike could wholeheartedly throw himself into so seeing the campaign, he took two weeks planning, sitting there untouched frustrated him more that he cared to admit.

Huffing past the abandoned game Mike sat himself down infront of the old couch. he pulled out his binder for science class and got to work on with some homework.

Ever since him being a small child Mike had always found the sound of the rain to be something soothing, it would often help him fall asleep quickly so he couldn't really say that it was a surprise that he did just that, his head tilted back resting against the seat cushions of the couch and and a stiff neck beginning to set in. The real surprise was the hand over his mouth when he woke up.

The basement door was wide open letting the howling wind rattle throughout the room, before he could stop himself Mike tried to call out through the hand that was heavily resting on his face.

"Hey kid, calm down."

Looking up to see Chief Hopper there, had the opposite effect on

Mike, a whole other sort of terror filled him.

"What happened? Is Will ok?, that's why your here because something happened?"

His questions seemed to come out a mile a minute.

The chief raised his hand in exasperation to his own face, wiping some of the collected rainfall onto his already soaked trousers. The banging basement door drew Mikes attention away from the Chief and incidentally away from the real reason that the Chief was even there in the first place.

"Listen kid I didn't wanna drag you back into this but the first place they're gonna come looking for her is with me, so I need you to keep her hidden."

Given that Mike had just been violently awoken and the storm that seemed to be making its was through the basement door, he was finding it very hard to concentrate on anything let alone the quiet rushed words of the older man in front of him.

Growing tiered of the kids lack of focus Hop snapped his fingers right infront of Mike's eyes.

"Hey, schools gonna be cancelled tomorrow because of the storm so I just need you to keep her quiet for 24 hours?"

The words finally began to sink into his head.

"Her?"

Hopper got up from his crouched position in front Mike and turned towards the blanket fort. Heading in that direction he looked back and held his index finger up to his mouth telling the boy in a silent command to keep quiet.

If somebody would have told Mike that morning that El would have been back curled up in that blanket fort he refused to take down he would never have believed them, yet there she was and here he was.

Before he could figure out what was happening he was up and making his way across the room.

"El?." Came his panicked whisper.

Just as he was about to make it to her Hopper crouched down and grabbed him. Hopper was trying to get Mike to look at him but Mike's eyes wouldn't leave the curled up form that was a sleeping Eleven. She was here. She really was alive. Resigning himself to the fact that he wouldn't be able to hold the younger boy's attention Hop decided to just say what he had to and hope that it made its way into his head.

"I get this is a big deal, but she's been through a lot this year. You have all the time tomorrow for that conversation you wanna have but right now she needs to rest, ok kid?"

Not really taking in his words Mike just nodded his head in hopes that Hopper would let him go.

Sighing, he let the boy go and watched as he slowly made his way to the blanket fort. Standing up Jim began to make his way to the still wide open door, getting Eleven out of that lab had been hard but keeping her safe from Brenner and the lab would be the most difficult thing, he wasn't sure how he would do it but he knew that he had too.

"Hey Mike?" The Chief quietly called out.

It took a second before he raised his head to look at the figure in the door way.

"Make sure you lock this door behind me, and make sure you keep her hidden, I'm not kidding around here." Mike nodded his head in response. Oh course he would keep her hidden, there was no way he was losing her again.

Mike knew he didn't really want to leave her even if it was just for the short time to make sure the door was locked behind the Chief, all of this seemed too good to be true and Mike's immediate fear was that he would turn around for a second and wake back up and this past five minutes would all have been a dream, so with that in mind he rushed over to the door as quickly as he could to lock it. Relief filled him when he turned back around and she was still there.

Soft, distressed whimpering was leaving her mouth, it reminded Mike of that night in the school hallway when the bad man was holding her and he was being held back, no matter how hard he tried he couldn't get to her. But he could now. Walking over he noted how tiered she looked even while sleeping, not the regular tiered either it was the exhausted look she had whenever she used her powers too much.

"Mike....Mike." She whimpered, beginning to fidget, instinct took over and he rushed to her side grabbing her freezing cold hand. Almost instantly her fidgeting stopped and her soft calls of his name slowed as if she could sense that he was there. He wasn't a stupid kid he new when Hopper said that "they" would be looking for her he ment Hawkins lab. That meant that she'd been there at least some of the past 12 months, he'd been so close when she needed him and he wasn't there. He tried to not let it eat him up too much, four kids wandering around Hawkins lab would have been caught almost immediately and it would take years for Mike to let go of that guilt but one day El would sit him down tell him that everything happened the way that it was supposed to, that if it had happened any different they wouldn't have the lives that they had now and she loved her life now.

For a second time that night Mike wasn't entirely sure when he fell asleep but when he woke he was laying in the entrance to the blanket fort half under one of the many sleeping bags in there, facing the stairs he was afraid to turn his head, afraid that last night really had been a dream and that she wouldn't be there when he turned around.

With the panic rising at a world rapid pace in his stomach he almost missed the small squeeze of fingers around his own. And just like that Mike was all too happy to turn and look back at El, she looked better like the sleep had really recharged her.

"Hi, Mike" whispered El, squeezing his hand once again.

"Hey, El." Came his response squeezing her hand in reply. "I'm glad your back."

"Me too."

From that moment on if the two of them were in a close vicinity of each other it would be a very rare sight to see them not clutching each other's hands.

2. Day 2 - cuddling somewhere.

Notes for the Chapter:

I don't know I really like how this chapter turned out, hope you all enjoy :).

Day 2 - cuddling somewhere.

Early Spring 1985

It had taken a while and a lot of work but El was official intergrated into society, well Hawkins, but it was a start.

She would never really be able to live a normal life, not completely, but as normal as a telekinetic government experiment could hope to become. And part of starting to live a normal life was getting herself an education, so three months after her second return to Hawkins Hopper took her to Hawkins Middle school where she began her nightly tutoring sessions with various teachers.

The 'official' story that was given to explain El's sudden appearance around Hawkins was that she had come from an abusive home where her parents had kept her hidden away from the world just because they could, it wasn't a perfect story but El had found that it made people sad enough that they didn't want to bring it up around her often.

Some days, or rather most days, El would leave her shared house with Hopper a little earlier than she needed too so she could spend some time with the boys before her tutoring began, well mostly Mike.

El found that she loved walking anywhere outside, she found the wide open spaces amazing places after being cooped up in a lab for so long the green of the grass and the trees a lovely contrast to the stark white tiles in the lab where she spent her formative years. As she rounded the corner to the middle school the breeze that was running through the air ruffled her hair, it was longer now than she could ever remember it being.

As usual she found she had a couple of minuets to spare before the school let out so she made her way to the bike rack that she knew the boys' always used to wait for them. Finding Mike's bike in the middle of them all she rested against it just as the bell rung to signal the end of the day. Keeping one eye on the entrance of the school it wasn't long before she spotted Dustin's signature hat standing out in the crowd. When he spotted her he let out a smile that lit up his entire face, and within a couple of minuets she was surrounded by some of her favourite people in the world.

Looking around the faces of the people she held most dear she noticed that perhaps her favourite face was missing, trying not to think to much of Mike's absence, she made small talk with the boys until the entrance lot seemed to empty almost completely. She was just about to question his whereabouts when a speeding car made its way into the lot.

Following the car with her eyes, El saw it make one of the worst attempts at parking she had ever seen, granted she knew she hadn't seen many in her short time outside of the lab, but she knew that whoever was in that car obviously didn't care very much about that at this point in time, the quiet chatter that had continued on between the three boys while El's focus had shifted ceased to continue when they all saw a panicked Karen Wheeler get out the car and run straight to the entrance of the middle school.

No one in the group was talking anymore. They all understood something must be wrong, very very wrong. Before anyone could try to offer up any words of comfort El was up off of Mike's bike and halfway to the entrance of the school. After violently swinging the door open El stopped and looked around trying to locate Mrs Wheeler, she'd only met Mike's mom a couple of times but she knew her enough to know that she only really had this strong of a reaction to something to do with her kids. Closing her eyes El used her powers to locate Mike, she'd been trying to use them less and less, partly due to Hopper and Joyce but also for herself, but as soon as she saw Mrs Wheeler she knew she needed to get to Mike. By the time she located him in he nurses office the door had swung open behind her and the rest of her friends were piling in around her. Ignoring the small trickle of blood that started to fall from her nose she began to run

through the hall, the sound of five kids thundering through the middle school hallways was echoing around them now that the school was empty making everything seem much louder to them all.

El had found herself in the nurses office not that long ago when Hopper was called into work and there was no one around to watch her until her tutoring session, she had reassured him that she would be fine and she knew the way to the school, and maybe if Mike hadn't introduced her to ice cream that very weekend she wouldn't have eaten the entire carton that she knew was in the freezer, but she did, so forty minutes into her English class she began to throw up, resulting in a teary faced Eleven hunched over a bucket apologising to Hopper as she alternated between throwing up and hiccuping.

Just like that day the trip to the office seemed to take far too long, even El understood that Hawkins Middle School wasn't particularly big but she would swear up and down that that day reality must have been playing tricks on them, as the hallways seemed to at least double in length.

Finally seeing the closed door marked 'nurse's office' all of the kids seemed to garner a little more energy to get to the door faster, it briefly crossed Eleven's mind that she shouldn't just barge in, but surely both Mike and his mom would understand, before she found herself thinking about it too much she turned the handle to the door and ran straight through the office to where students were kept when being seen to by the nurse.

"Mike!" Eleven called out, in perhaps the loudest voice anyone had ever heard her use.

Just as she was about to call out again Eleven saw several bodies huddled around one of the beds. She suddenly found herself terrified, he must be really hurt, was all she could think. She began to slowly make her way to where she could now see Mrs wheeler. Between Mikes mom and the nurse El could just about manage to make out a head of dark hair laid out against the stark white of the paper sheet placed down over the bed. What made her stop in her tracks was the gash near his hairline, the gash that seemed very bloody.

"Holy hell, what happened to your head?" Dustin managed to blurt

out, most of the time Dustin's blunt commentary on everything made El laugh, but not so much today.

Karen turned to look at the bunch of kids that had come in search of her son, "Nurse Jones was just telling me that Mike will be fine, probably not at school tomorrow, but he will live, so you all should probably get going home before your mothers start to wonder where you've all disappeared off to." With one pointed look and a motherly tone all of the boys behind El turned and began to walk out of the office yelling a chorus of goodbyes to the remaining people.

The nurse finished applying several thin strips of tape to Mike's forehead and turned to Karen, asking her to follow her so she could get her to sign Mike out. Leaving the room Karen raised a hand and stroked El's hair, the woman had done this a couple times now and El found the gesture normally to be very soothing but right now El struggled to think of anything other than how Mike was somehow managing to look paler than normal.

At some point after seeing Mike laid out on the bed El had raised her thumb to her mouth to pick at the skin around her nail bed, a nervous habit she had picked up recently.

Making her way to where Mike was, slowly, she quietly asked him what had happened.

"Oh, I, um I just fell, in last period." Came his response. He was struggling to hoist himself into an upward position. El held her hand out for him to take without even thinking about it, this was them all over, helping each other through and through.

She smiled at him, she knew he was lying, "Friends don't lie." She spoke quietly now that the adrenalin was leaving her.

"Troy tripped me up, I don't think it was in his plan that I smash my head of the desk." He admitted.

Eleven was worried again, "The mouthbreather?" She asked.

He just nodded his head in admission, but that was a bad idea, a way bad idea, now he felt all woozy again.

Seeing all the colour drain from his face El reacted before she knew what she was doing and wrapped her arms around him, burying her face in his shoulder. He really didn't look too good, his arms made their way around her as he rested his head against hers.

"Your gonna be late to your math class," he whispered, now that they were holding each other he could whisper, his head preferred the whispering.

"I don't care," she said, her voice sounded watery, she was 30 seconds away from tears.

"Why is your nose bleeding?" Mike asked her hoping to take her mind off of the situation.

"I needed to find you." She replied in that small voice she used to use. The voice that reminded him of El from the first time he'd met her, of El seven months ago when she'd only just come back. He hated that voice.

"I'm fine, I'm gonna be ok. And now you can come over tomorrow and we'll have eggo's for lunch." He was trying to make her feel better and she knew that, she understood that this was Mike all over, completely selfless in the face of any problem, this boy who would throw himself off of a cliff to certain death so his best friend wouldn't get injured and try to make her feel better when he could very well be seriously injured, El still struggled to find words, especially in those initial couple of years following her release from the lab, so in that moment instead of struggling to find the words that seemed to have escaped her she just squeezed him harder.

She didn't let go when she heard the women returning, and even when she had too she held his hand until he got into the car to go home. He was right she was late to her tutoring session but she didn't care, not that day.

3. Day 3 - watching a movie.

Day 3 - watching a movie

1989

It was a miracle and they both new it, the old busted up VCR player that had lived in the wheelers living room for years and years - which had to be replaced last year due to the fact that it had repeatedly and fairly often chewed up a number of the wheeler family tapes - had just made it through all three of the Star Wars movies without chewing up a single second of it.

Much to all of the boys' surprise El loved the Star Wars films which was completely fine with them. So when the anniversary of El's reappearance came up and Mike had asked her if there was anything that she wanted to do she couldn't think of anything better than marathoning her favourite movies with her favourite person.

So early one Saturday morning Mike drove to the Hopper house to pick a bleary eyed El up, he still had his old bike and occasionally he and Eleven would drag it out and ride around the neighbourhoods of Hawkins for old times sake, but that morning they had a mission, they were headed to the supermarket before their marathon to pick up hordes of junk food unsurprisingly El had the biggest sweet tooth going, and although over time they had managed to get through to her the importance of a somewhat balanced diet there was the odd day that El just liked to stuff her face with sugary treats and Mike wasn't going to stop her today.

So at 9am one cold November morning Mike sat in his car, with the heat turned up watching a very sleepy El leave the house she shared with Hopper. The still chief of police saw her out of the door giving her a hug before she skipped across the driveway to where Mike was waiting, the older mans stern face found Mikes in the windshield nodding to him in acknowledgement. He still scared Mike a little but after their recent conversation they both came to the realisation that they just wanted El to be happy especially after everything she went through as a child.

Just as El was about to make it to the car Mike leaned over the seat and opened the door for her. Folding herself into the car and shutting the door behind her, El found herself eternally grateful that Mike had put the heater on, maybe it was a side effect of years in the lab, but she knew a lot of people who were also just cold, but her toes and nose almost always seemed to be freezing. Mike thought her cold nose was cute, especially when she would bury it in his neck to warm it up.

Before he had a chance to pull out of the driveway, El was leaning over and pressing her lips to his, from the corner of his eye Mike saw a scowl come across the Chief's face, which in turn made Mike freeze up. He had always found the Chief to be scary, even before El but now that he was seeing Hops' adoptive daughter he found the man absolutely terrifying.

El quietly laughed to herself as she pulled away, noting how red his face still went even after all this time. His only response was to smirk over at her as he finally started to exit the driveway.

It was only a short drive to the most central of the supermarkets in Hawkins so within a few minutes they were pulling into the surprisingly full parking lot. Well Mike was surprised at how busy it was El understood that most of the Hawkins residents liked to shop on a Saturday morning because very often both her and Hopper would be among them.

Impatient as always, El was already halfway out the car when she turned back to say to him, "Come on Mike I want eggo's."

-

Mike wasn't sure how long he thought he would be in the grocery store with El but in hindsight he shouldn't have been surprised that it took them an hour and a half to finally get back to his house. Complete with four very packed bags or snacks.

El explained to Mike that she was just going upstairs to do the eggo's and that he should set up the first movie and that she would be down in a couple of minutes, but given their far too long trip to the store he wasn't surprised when he found himself stomping up the stairs, they

were never going to get through all three movies before everyone came over tonight at this rate.

The two quiet mumbling voices stopped Mike from calling out for eleven, it sounded like Nancy but Nancy wasn't meant to be back until next weekend.

"Thanks El, for listening I know today's a big deal for you, I just didn't know what what to do." Hiccured Nancy, Mike's curiosity was piqued.

"It's ok, there are a lot of people who love you Nancy," it still amazed Mike just how far El had come, "especially the mouth breather that's hiding around the corner."

The game was up, dropping his head around the corner he smiled at the two girls sitting close together on the couch. Nancy had been crying, her face was all red.

"You ok Nancy?, I thought you weren't coming back till next weekend?" Despite how he might sometimes act he loves both his sisters and would do anything for them so looking at Nancy and knowing that she had been crying sucked.

She nodded her head at him and started to stand from the couch, "I'm fine, well I will be after a shopping trip with mom and Holly for tonight." El may have wanted a quiet night with her favourite people but Karen had it in her head that she needed a party so that's what they were having, and no one could tell her otherwise.

El and Nancy started to leave the living room, and despite Nancy's non explanation Mike was still her little brother so the need to pester her over the situation was strong. But then El shot him a pointed look and grabbed his hand to lead him into the kitchen. She could tell it was driving him insane not asking what it was that they were talking about but she had promised Nancy not to say anything, and after all it was Mike that explained a promise to her.

"Tell me please." Mike begged as El began loading up the toaster with as many Eggo's as she could, she looked up at him to find him pulling his 'puppy dog face'.

Sighing El replied, "You know that face doesn't work on me right? And no I won't tell you but I promise you that Nancy will when she's ready to," Mike's response was to stick his lower lip out in a pout, El reached up her hand and flicked said lip, just as he toaster popped up the waffles.

El placed them on the plate she had ready and loaded up the toaster a second time.

Mike held out his pinky finger in front of her face smiling at her as he said, "pinky promise?"

Without looking to him she too held up her pinky which he hooked with his own, the pinky promise was, like with most other things something that he had to teach her about, but this was one of those small rituals that had and would last through the years for the both of them.

It took them a while, a lot longer than Mike would have liked but eventually the pair found themselves on the couch in the basement as the yellow words scrolled up the screen El happily munching away on her plate full of eggo's which Mike was resting on his chest as his head was currently using El's lap as a pillow.

Right here, watching her favourite movies, eating her favourite food all in the company of her favourite person El was the happiest she had ever been, remembering the freighted, traumatised little girl she used to be and acknowledging how different the person she has become is, and knowing that ultimately it was down to the people around her to thank for that, that's why she wasn't surprised when she found herself pull her hand away from playing with Mike's hair and drop down to softly press her lips against his own.

Lifting her face just enough so that he was in focus she kept close and whispered quietly, because these words were meant for just the two of them not the rest of the world. "Mike."

He let out a low hum in acknowledgment before she could finish her statement.

"I love you."

"I love you too, El"

It wasn't the first time they had whispered those words to each other.

Dr Brenner from the lab used to tell her he loved her all the time now she fully understood that he was lying or at the most he loved her powers not her.

So in response she held her little finger out in front of they're close faces.

"Pinky promise?"

Smiling he hooked her finger with his own and while looking at her smiling face he brought their joined hands down so he could kiss the back of her hand.

"Pinky promise."

Notes for the Chapter:

This was real hard to get out for some reason so I apologise if it feels jolty, but as always I hope you enjoyed.

4. Day 4 - on a date.

Day 4 - on a date.

"But what is dating?" El asked Mike from her place leaning against his bike. Lucas, in response to the girls question just burst out laughing, almost uncontrollably, Will, Dustin and Max shared a quiet chuckle but was no where near as loud as Lucas had decided to be about it.

While waiting for her friends to get out of school before she went in, a girl she had seen talking to Dustin a couple of times had come over to her and just very bluntly asked if her and Mike were Dating, El had just scrunched up her eyebrow in confusion at the girl not fully understanding the words as she sometimes did.

The girl had gone red and mumbled something about how it didn't really matter and walked off before El had the chance to ask her about it, so naturally like with anything she didn't understand she asked Mike.

Before answering her he had leant around her to punch Lucas in the arm in an attempt to get him to shut up but it just made the boy laugh harder.

Straightening back up he spoke quietly to her, "It's when two people spend time together, in a romantic way."

El smiled up at Mike and cheerily replied with, "OK."

He was surprised when she got up from her seat on his bike, grabbed her book bag and told everyone that she would see them later on, normally when she asked him to clarify something she had a thousand and one follow up questions. But little did Mike know about El and Nancy's talk a couple of weekends back about all things romance and boys and love and finally getting clarification on Mike's mumbling explication about they difference between and friend and somebody that you 'like'.

It took roughly four hours before Mike had made his mind up that he needed to take El out on a real date, sure they spent time together whenever they could, but he liked El and wanted to take her out.

Confessing all to his mom had been terrifying but ultimately for the better, Karen loved it after all when her kids confided in her. And she was probably a little too generous when paying Mike for the extra chores he began doing around the house to pay for said date.

Hopper wouldn't have been impressed if he new about this, but as far as Karen Wheeler was concerned Hopper didn't have to know. What harm could two kids going to get pizza really get up too. But then Karen understood that it wasn't the harm they could get up to so much as the protective nature she knew he had over El.

Mike had wanted to keep their date a surprise but Karen insisted on him letting the Cheif know that they wouldn't really be hauled up in her family basement all day, that they would in fact be going out and she watched with mild amusement when every time she did bring it up, how red his face would go and how terrified he would look. So when Karen ran into the Cheif whilst running errands a few days before the big date she began to happily chat to him about Mike taking El out on a date.

"Woah, hold on a second, so she lied to me and Mike is taking her out?" He asked Karen as she readjusted a squirming Holly who was now just to big to be carried everywhere but still wanted to be.

"What, erm, no. She, uh she doesn't know they're going out, it's a surprise." She managed to get out looking up at the man, she suddenly became very aware of why Mike was so frightened of the Cheif.

He was a man that demanded the attention of those around him, even when he was silent, the only person in the entirety of Hawkins that didn't seem to be even a little bit frightened of the man was the sweet little girl Mike was trying to take out on her first date.

"Look, I'm taking them to the restaurant, waiting for them and

driving them back, at no point will they be on their own. Plus they're thirteen Jim what do you think they're gonna be doing, Mike plays Dungeons and Dragons on the weekends and El spent most of her life locked up alone, let them be normal kids. Jim I know it's hard to let them go but if you've ever seen them two together you know they just want to make each other happy, so I'm taking them out on their first date this weekend OK?" Karen wasn't a forceful person by nature at all but she just wanted her kids to know happiness and love, perhaps like she never has, and on occasion her protectiveness ballooned out to her kids friends and she would stop at nothing to make them happy, even if it meant standing up to scary police Chiefs.

So when date night eventually arrived and she dropped the pair off at the pizza restaurant in town she didn't think twice about leaving them on their own for twenty minutes while she headed over to the grocery store to pick up cake supplies for the next day. What surprised her was when she got back an angry looking Chief was waiting outside for her.

Karen sighed as she got out of her car, waiting for the onslaught she expected to come her way.

"I had just nipped to the grocery store, I was 10 minutes." She said in a way of an explanation. Much to her surprise he didn't have anything to say to her, he just turned to stare into the restaurant from the window. Following his eye line Karen easily found what he was staring at, there in the middle of the restaurant, Mike and El sat next to each other in a booth, a pizza between them, surrounded by several side dishes. The Kids had large smiles plastered across their faces as they looked at each other and Mike held up a napkin to El's chin wiping something away.

"She always smile that big around the kid." Jim asked, not taking his eyes off of the two kids.

"As far as I've seen. Always." Karen thought back over the last year, knowing her words to be true, especially after the treat of the lab coming back for her had gone, despite what people thought Karen wasn't stupid, she knew this girl was the one that those people from Hawkins lab were after and after a tearful conversation with Mike the night Will came back she knew that she understood as much as she

probably ever would.

"Okay," the Cheif said quietly, "He keeps her smiling like that and we won't have any problems."

Karen smiled to herself as Jim turned to get into his police car even though he sounded stern Karen could sense the light tone in his voice, he liked seeing her happy and would do just about anything to do so. "I'll see you in a couple of hours Jim." Karen said in a farewell.

When Jim stopped by the Wheeler house a couple of hours later to pick El up after his shift he found the two laid on opposite sides of the couch fast asleep with a blanket placed over the both of them, with the TV playing in the background he suspected they're sleepy state to be due to the amount of food that they ate on their date, he knew that El for sure had a tendency to nap when she'd had a huge meal and after all they were both growing kids.

The Monday after their first date found El sat once again on Mike's bike as the group shared a conversation about the film that they would be seeing that weekend. As usual El wasn't particularly bothered about what it was just as long as she could get ice cream.

Mike's left hand was currently being held inbetween both of El's as she played with his fingers. Looking up El caught sight of the girl who had asked if her and Mike were dating scowling at the pair from within her own group of mainly female friends.

The parking lot was almost completely empty when El had to make a move to get to her tutoring, the scowling girl was just about to pass her on her way out of the lot. El, much later would come to understand that she was feeling possessive but at that moment in time she just ignored the nameless emotion and pulled on Mike's hand until he bent down to her level, to say he was surprised when she pressed her lips against his would be an understatement but before he new it she was pulling away and waving goodbye to everyone as she made he way into the school. A surprised smile on almost everyone's mouths. That was the first time they'd ever kissed in front of any one else or anywhere that wasn't Mike's basement, he

prayed this was the start of a new routine for them, after all he liked people knowing that he and El were a couple.

Notes for the Chapter:

Karen is low-key one of my fave's. As usual I hope you all enjoyed.

5. Day 5 - kissing.

Day 5 - kissing.

1984.

El was back in Hawkins for a month and a half before anybody felt safe enough to take her outside in the day again. Although the paranoia was founded and understandable almost everyone found it annoying. Most of all El. Even though Hopper had started to tell people the story of the girl who he had taken in after finding her locked up in some house, he still felt it best to keep her out of the way, just for now.

She'd had a taste of what life was like outside though and even when she was briefly trapped in the upside down before the bad men came to get her at least she had space, she wasn't cooped up like in the lab. She understood why they all insisted on her staying out of sight but that didn't mean that she had to like it.

It had been one of those rare days when Hopper had driven her over to the Wheeler house this time mid-afternoon although she didn't fully understand what any of it meant he had carefully explained to her that he was working a double shift and that he would be back tomorrow to pick her up.

What El still felt odd about was walking through the Wheeler's front door. Even though it had only been a week last time she was there, it had felt like much longer. And something about the secrecy and sneaking in and out had imprinted itself on her.

It was beyond cold this close to Christmas in Hawkins, so the warm sweet smelling heat that El was met with when Karen opened the front door was one of the most welcoming things she could have dreamed of. El knew what that sweet smell was. She could always remember her and Mike's conversation in the gym, his promises that his mom was a good cook and he wasn't lying, El had just found that she had an incredible sweet tooth so she naturally preferred Mrs Wheelers's sweets.

With a warm smile Karen offered Hop a cup of coffee before he had to head out, which he declined, explaining that he was running late and he needed to get going.

After saying goodbye to El, Hop ruffled her hair as she walked through the Wheeler's front door. Karen caught El huffing as she smoothed down her hair causing the older woman to smile.

Closing the door behind the young girl Karen took El's fluffy coat from her after she shimmied out of it and hung it up in the hall closet, then she steered El towards the kitchen. El looked around in wonder at the kitchen sides that seemed to be overflowing with cupcakes, the multicoloured frosting that was sitting atop the cupcakes was making El's mouth water.

"Mike should be back in no time, but before that how about me and you share one or two of these?" Karen asked picking up two cupcakes. El was nodding her head before Karen could even finish asking.

"We'll come on then, it can be our secret treat." Karen pushed one of the pink cakes toward El as she clambered up onto the stool ready to enjoy her treat.

El was pacing, Mike noted that he'd never seen El pace before, her jeans rustling together seemed to be the only sound in the basement, he had only been home for forty minutes and they still had at least an hour and a half before Dustin, Lucas and Will made their way over for there sleepover. Even when they were keeping El a 'secret' the first time she showed up, she had never been cooped up like this and unlike her time at the lab freedom was in the opposite side of an unlocked door.

He knew how El felt about being cooped up because not that long ago she had tried to explain it too him, using stilted words, but he still got what she was trying to say.

It didn't take Mike long to figure out why she was pacing.

Mike was an impulsive kid in his very nature, but anyone could have

guessed that especially since the first time he'd ran into El he decided to take her home with him and look after her. So it wasn't much of a surprise when an idea to try and quell their, mainly El's, boredom wouldn't leave his head.

Grabbing one of his school notebooks, he tore a sheet from the back and scribbled out a note to his mom explaining that they had just gone for a walk and that they would be back soon, hopefully she would be too preoccupied with baby Holly to notice, and besides she rarely if ever came down to check on the pair when they were in the basement so the note was more a precaution than anything. Standing Mike walked over to the empty D&D table and placed the note in the centre, his mom should see it if it was there he thought, it was right in front of the stairs after all.

Luckily the pair still had their shoes on but their coats where another problem all together, both of them were upstairs in the hallway closet, and Mike knew he couldn't risk going up their to grab them.

Making an executive decision, as El turned to walk away from him he grabbed her hand, she looked up at him, shocked.

Just as she opened her mouth to question him he spoke, "Come on." He said turning towards the basement door, they both had sweaters on and they shouldn't be gone too long, just long enough for El not to feel so cooped up.

Dragging her behind him he picked up his discarded hoodie from its place on a chair by the door. He passed the hoodie back to her just before he opened the door, looking back at her confused expression he felt that maybe he should explain before he drags her out into the cold with no explanation.

"You wanna go for a walk El?" He asked figuring that she'd probably had enough of people demanding things from her to last a lifetime.

Looking up at him, she nodded her head at him, a small smile lighting up her face.

"Ok, well uh put this on, we can't be gone too long though." He said smiling as she zipped up the hoodie, El grabbed his hand as she

grabbed the door handle, swinging the door wide open, she was, so ready to just be outside, even if it was for only a little while.

Quietly shutting the door behind them Mike led her to the fence that ran in between the power lines and the houses and they began their impromptu afternoon walk.

It was cold when they had their coats on, freezing without them, but when El looked over to him with a smile on her face he knew that this was exactly what she needed. And for that he couldn't complain, too much.

At some point they stopped walking content to sit huddled close with there backs to the houses of Hawkins, El had grabbed Mikes cold hands as soon as they stopped and hauled both her's and his up the sleeves of the hoodie in an attempt to warm them up.

"Thank you, Mike." El said softly.

"It's alright, I can't imagine what being cooped up day after day must feel like. It must suck." Even though she spoke far more often than she did in the initial week of their meeting, her words were still select and few. But that just meant that those around her just appreciated them all the more.

"It's not so bad when people are with me, I don't like being on my own, it makes me think of the bad men." El's voice was quiet, those even a foot behind the pair wouldn't even be able to hear the girls mumbled words, but Mike had heard them, he always got angry at the mention of those bad men. The ones so desperate to keep El to themselves. And this time was no different, most times he wasn't sure how to handle the anger that bubbled up inside him, one time six months into El's disappearance he punched a wall in his basement, that didn't help, it just really hurt his hand.

El looked up at the pale boy after a couple of silent seconds, even without the little 'v' that appeared in his brown she could sense the anger coming from him, he wasn't angry at her though she knew from experience that Mike would just rather hash a problem out right then and there rather than stew on it like she did. So she worked back through what was said and it came to her, the bad men.

Although she knew he liked it when she spoke to him about things, she also knew that Mike blamed himself for some of the stuff that happened and she could never understand why, she didn't blame him at all, so why should he.

As Mike turned back to her a question that would never be asked resting on his lips she hurriedly pressed her lips against his, she wasn't quite sure what this was but she knew she liked doing it with Mike, she didn't know why she did it but she knew that she wanted to and in that moment that was good enough for the both of them.

Later, much later in a hurried, quiet conversations in the dark they would talk about what kissing was and what it meant and even though she wouldn't fully understand she would accept and mull over his words until another question would come to her mind, ending with them once again sharing a kiss before they fell asleep listening to Dustin's soft snores.

But for the time being they both pulled away with bashful smiles on their faces' ready to get back inside from the cold.

And tomorrow when Mike woke up with a sniffle in his nose and a cough on his chest she would kiss him again, unknowingly contracting the cold herself.

6. Day 6 - wearing each other's clothes.

Day 6 - wearing each other's cloths.

1987.

It was no secret that El liked to steal Mike's clothes, a jacket here and sweater there. It was a habit that started with a blue jacket almost four years ago and it's a habit that wouldn't really ever leave them.

Unfortunately for Chief Jim Hopper he seemed to be the only one that had a problem with it. Ted Wheeler couldn't care less about almost anything it seemed, after all it took the man almost three years to figure out that El was the same person the government had questioned him and his wife about all those years ago, And much to his utter dismay Karen thought it was beyond cute smiling up at the Cheif when every so often he would have to make a trip to the Wheeler house to drop off a pile of Mike's clothes that El had managed to take. He'd offered to buy her boys shirts and jackets multiple times if she wanted them and to his utter dismay the last time that he had asked she had replied with, "It's not the clothes it's that they're Mike's clothes."

Hop had nearly choked on his pancakes that morning.

Daylight savings was something that even after four years El still wasn't able to wrap her head around but this time it was Dustin who explained that no one really understood it, it was just something that happened and sometimes it was good and sometimes it was bad.

Today though she was going to assume that it was the bad one, seeing as everyone was making their way to school in an even more sleepy state than usual, it was one of the three day that El attended Hawkins high school with her friends, the other two were one on one tutoring, the local child services team had been adamant that it was important that El was in as much of a normal routine as possible and at this point it meant three days at school, she wouldn't tell anyone especially when the were busy grumbling about how ridiculas it was that they had to get up so early for school, but she loved the routine of it, she was hoping in fact that maybe one day soon she would be

able to go to school with them four or even five days a week.

Mike had almost been late this morning, the first time El had ever seen him be almost late for anything. But now their group of friends were slowly making their way to school with Mike's bed head bringing up the rear.

It wasn't until lunch that El noticed that something wasn't quite right with Mike, not in himself but more about with how he looked. It was stressing her out that she couldn't figure it out, she knew Mike after all knew him better than anyone else and it was upsetting her that she couldn't figure out what was wrong about the person she knew the most.

Sitting next to each other at the cafeteria table at lunch meant that Mike could feel the tension that was rolling off of El in waves. She had seemed fine this morning and no one had specified anything that happened that was out of the ordinary, and talking about things in this school was beyond common. Knowing that if he brought anything up before El had chance to finish her food would be a sure fire way to just put her in an even worse mood, because everyone sitting at their table could testify as to what a mistake that would be. Mike let the issue stew in his head for the ten minuets that it took for El to finish up her lunch, trying to decide how to best approach the issue with her.

In the end he just decided to ask, bending down so he could whisper in her ear he asked, "You wanna talk about what's wrong?"

Even though he had whispered and even though she should have known that he would have picked up on her mood that didn't mean that she was actually prepared for the whispered words in her ear, which resulted in her jumping about a foot in the air. Suddenly the world felt a whole lot smaller.

Everyone at the table turned their eyes to the shocked pair. Which was not helping the bubbling anxiety that El was feeling.

As she turned to look up at Mike she felt the tears that were threatening to fall, her breath harder to catch, she couldn't understand why she couldn't figure this out, she should know damnit.

El felt like the entire cafeteria was closing in on her, never had she wanted to leave school before but right now she wanted nothing more than to bolt from the school and go and see Hopper. The worst part was that she knew no one would be too angry at her for leaving, they would always 'understand' because of her past, but El was sick of her past ruining the now, it had happened and she wanted to move on from it. So with everyone staring at her she shot up from her seat and bolted from the cafeteria. The brisk air helped her breathing as she rounded the corner of the cafeteria building.

El's head was resting against the cold, rough brick of the building, so in her own world, trying to get her breathing back to normal, trying to just stop feeling like the whole world was bearing down on her, that she didn't notice Mike calling after her.

Not until she felt his hand start to run up and down her back in a comforting gesture.

"I'm sorry." Was all El offered in a quiet apology.

"Why, you don't have anything to apologise for."

With her eyes closed, Mikes soft offering of support and her breath coming more naturally, El finally felt the world tip back onto its axis.

Finally after what felt like far too long El stood up again. Her breathing was back to normal, later she would find out that these were episodes that she sometimes had called panic attacks, "completely normal, given the circumstances." Her doctor would say and although they would never fully go away they would eventually come less and less over the years.

Grabbing Mike's hand for support she rested her head against his striped shirt. And that was when it hit her, Mike wearing a striped shirt was nothing new perhaps that was why she couldn't figure it out. But there he was wearing one of her striped shirts, one she liked to wear because it reminded her of what Mike would wear. Apparently she would need to help Hop next time he sent back Mike's clothes.

Smiling to herself as she pulled back, she picked an imaginary piece

of Flint from the shirt.

"Nice shirt, Mike."

She watched as his brows pulled down creating that small crease in between his brows that she likes, confused by the turn of her mind.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hope you enjoyed :) let me know what you thought.

Author's Note:

Hope you enjoyed.